



Lake County Commissioners

406-883-7204

Fax (406) 883-7283

LAKE COUNTY

106 4th Ave. E.

Polson, Mt. 59860

SJ 15 SURVEY OF MONTANA COUNTY COMMISSIONS

Lake County attached explanation:

Lake County's federal lands are primarily composed of acreage located within the boundaries of three wildlife refuges, the National Bison Range, and federal forest land east of Flathead Lake.


Public Health, Safety, and Welfare would not be of concern to Lake County on the wildlife refuges or the National Bison Range. We have not been made aware of any conditions on federal forest lands east of Flathead Lake that would be of concern to our citizens. Much of this land lies in checkerboard fashion with state land and tracts owned by Plum Creek Timber Co.


At present, the greatest potential public health, safety and welfare concerns for Lake County citizens is within the boundaries of the Mission Mountain Wilderness Area. This wilderness area runs along the western slope of the Mission Range of Lake County and is managed by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. Wildfire danger is significant due to beetle kill and the lack of logging activity that has produced an abundance of fuel for potential fires. A large wildfire in this area would negatively impact air and water quality, and could lead to the loss of homes and other structures if the fire were to spread to privately owned land.

As a body of Commissioners, we were disappointed in the quality of this survey and question its validity. Some of the questions are quite slanted, eg. #7, #16 and #20. It is apparent that the survey is attempting to solicit a particular answer to most of the questions. Any information gleaned from the survey would be suspect given how poorly the questions and responses were framed.

Lake County Commissioners are of the opinion that there should be more county and state input into decisions made that impact federal lands within all counties of Montana. We believe that there are special interest groups that have undue influence on federal land management in all Montana counties.

BOARD OF LAKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS


Ann Brower, Chairman


William D. Barron, Member


Gale Decker, Member



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL

RECEIVED

OCT 11 2013

PO BOX 201704
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1704
(406) 444-3742

LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL
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DESIGNATED REPRESENTATIVE
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HOPE STOCKWELL, Research Analyst
HELEN THIGPEN, Staff Attorney
NADINE SPENCER, Secretary
JOE KOLMAN, Legislative Environmental Analyst

Lake

SJ-15 SURVEY OF MONTANA COUNTY COMMISSIONS

This official state survey is required by the passage of Senate Joint Resolution No. 15 by the 2013 Legislature for a study evaluating the management of certain federal lands in Montana, assessing risks, and identifying solutions. Your county was selected for this survey because 15% or more of the land in your county is managed by a federal agency.

Surveys returned by Aug. 23 will be distributed to the EQC for the September meeting. If it is not possible to meet that deadline, please return the survey by Nov. 1. Attach any supplemental explanations, comments, suggestions, or other information your board finds pertinent.

PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE: (Attach explanation for each response as needed)

1. Do current wildfire conditions on federal lands within your county pose a significant threat to:
☐ Public Health and Safety ☒ **UNSURE** ☐ Public Property ☐ Private Property

2. Do you believe fire hazard on federally managed lands should be reduced to protect public health and safety within your county?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ **UNSURE**

3. Regarding the water supply your citizens use, does current federal land management of watersheds:
☐ Optimize water yield ☐ Diminish water yield ☒ **UNSURE** ☐ Have no impact

4. How important is it for people of your county to have motorized access to public lands for sustenance activities such as gathering wood, picking berries, harvesting wild game, etc.?
☐ Very Important ☐ Not Important ☒ **UNSURE**

5. Is there an adequate supply of motorized roads on federal lands in your county to accommodate emergency ingress/egress, facility maintenance, public access, and resource management?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ **UNSURE**

6. Regarding multiple-use recreational access routes on federal lands, does your county desire:
☒ **UNSURE** ☐ Increased Multi-Use Access ☐ Reduced Multi-Use Access ☐ Keep

Access As Is

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY: (Attach explanation for each response as needed)

7. Do you believe current fuel loads on any of the federal lands within your county could result in severe, uncontrollable, or catastrophic wildfires? (If so, provide geographic location in attachment)

____ Yes X No ____ Unsure

8. Is a high intensity wildfire on federal lands likely to cause a loss of important fish & wildlife habitat or harm Threatened or Endangered Species in your county (e.g. grizzly bears, lynx, sage grouse, black-footed ferret, bull trout)?

____ Yes X No ____ Unsure

9. Are environmental threats such as noxious weeds and bark beetle adequately controlled on federal lands within your county?

____ Yes ____ No X Unsure

10. Does the air quality in your county fall below acceptable health standards due to smoke originating from fires on federally managed lands?

____ Yes ____ No X Unsure

*FIRES IN OTHER COUNTIES
IMPACT OUR AIR QUALITY.*

ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY AND SUSTAINABILITY: (Attach explanation for each response as needed)

11. Is the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT revenues) your county derives from federally managed lands equivalent to the amount that actual land taxation of these lands would bring?

____ Yes ____ No Please estimate PILT as a percentage of county budget.

61%

12. Is the amount your county derives from the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) funds equivalent to the amount that your county could derive from responsible harvest or extraction of natural resources?

____ Yes ____ No Please estimate SRS as a percentage of county budget.

61%

13. Is the economic productivity and number of related private sector jobs commensurate with the resource production capacity of the federally managed lands within your county?

____ Yes ____ No X Unsure

14. Are federal policies for Threatened or Endangered Species adversely impacting private land owners, businesses, industries, or citizens within your county?

____ Yes X No ____ Unsure

15. Has federal land management resulted in adverse impacts to your county's economy?

____ Yes X No ____ Unsure

16. Do you believe changes in federal land management are necessary to increase your county's economy, employment opportunities, or tax base?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ Unsure

CONSISTENCY WITH STATE AND LOCAL OBJECTIVES: (Attach explanation for each response as needed)

17. Are federal land management actions consistent with your county's objectives?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ Unsure

18. Would your county like state assistance incorporating local government objectives into federal land management actions?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

OWNERSHIP AND JURISDICTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

19. Has your county experienced conflicts with federal ownership or jurisdictional responsibilities?

☐ Yes ☒ No (Please attach detailed description of conflicts)

20. How much influence do you believe special interests have on the ability of federal agencies to develop and implement effective land and resource management plans on federal lands in your county?

☐ None ☐ Moderate (please explain) ☒ Significant (please explain)

21. On a separate sheet, please describe your county's most significant concerns with federal land management, including current and past relations and communications with federal agencies and other relevant factors you believe legislators should be aware of, and provide any ideas that may help reduce risks or resolve concerns.

Thank you for your assistance. Please return your County Commission's response to:

Environmental Quality Council
ATTN: Joe Kolman, SJ15 Survey
Room 171B, Capitol Building
P.O. Box 201704
Helena, MT 59620-1704

Submitted by:

Gabe Decker

Date: 10.9.2013

Attested by:

Paula Holle

If you have questions or would like more information please contact Joe Kolman, staff for the EQC, at (406) 444-3747 or jkolman@mt.gov or Sen. Jennifer Fielder, the sponsor of SJ15, at (406) 210-5944 or by email at Sen.JFielder@legmt.gov